# A BRIEF NARRATIVE OF THE HARBOR,

## Of the Ancient Town of *RYE* in the County of *Suſſex*, with the preſent State thereof, and Reaſons for Preſervation of the ſame,

THE multiplicity of good Havens and Harbors for Ships to reſort to in Storms, and lye ſafe when arrived, being no ſmall bleſſing the Great Creator hath beſtowed on this Kingdom of *England*, and conducing ſo much to the benefit thereof: it becomes a duty incumbent to all Engliſhmen to endeavour their Preſervation. And the care thereof, and proviſion for the ſame (when falling to decay) hath not been thought unworthy of the Prudence and Policy of His Majeſty, and His Royal Progenitors, and the Repreſentatives

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To be Read at the Board this preſent day

ſentatives of the whole Nation in the High Court of Parliament: As may be ſufficiently proved, not only by the ſeveral Acts and Statutes there made touching the ſame; but by the ſums of Money ſometimes furniſhed out of the Exchequer it ſelf to that purpoſe.

And although the Harbour of the Ancient Town of *Rye* in the County of *Suſſex*, was never yet Chargeable to the publique Treaſure of the Nation: Yet hath that Great Councel and Court of the King and Kingdom, *viz.* the Parliament provided againſt the dammage thereof, in order to its Preſervation; not only in general with other Harbors by the Statute 34 *Hen.* 8. cap. 9. But in particular, by the Statute made on purpoſe 2 *Ed.* 6. cap. 30. *That no Baliſt, &c. be thrown into the Harbors of* Rye, *or* Winchelſea, *under the penalty of forty Shillings per Tun.*

Whoſoever knows the Harbor of *Rye*, and ſhall ſeriouſly and impartially conſider the ſtate and condition thereof, and the benefit and advantage thereby, continually accrewing to many thouſands both Natives and Aliens: will find ſeveral weighty and enforcing Reaſons to continue the preſervation thereof, although it were to be done at the Charge of the whole Nation.

This Harbor of *Rye* conſiſts principally (at this time, *viz.* 1677.) in one main Channel, running in from the Sea, which lyes Northweſt and Southeaſt, or very near thereto. On the Southweſt ſide of the Channel lyes a Bar of Sand, which Veſſels repairing to the Harbor, muſt leave the Larboard ſide as they go in. If they come from the Eaſtward, they may take their foundings from the *Camber* Beach, which reaches from the *Neſs* point, to the Harbor, and ſo run in. If they come from the Weſtward bound for the Harbor, there be two Marks which ſtand on the ſaid *Camber* Beach, on the Eaſt ſide of the Harbor, about two Miles without the ſaid Harbor, which muſt be kept one

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with the other. And this course will bring the said Vessels (so making for the Harbor) clear of the sail of the Sand aforesaid, till they bring two other Marks (which stand one of them upon the Cliffe of the Town, and the other on the point of the Castle Beach, at the West side of the Harbor) to bear one with the other, and then the said Vessels may run right into the Harbor. And giving the point last mentioned a little distance, may Anchor in three Fathom water, at low water; or as it pleaseth run ashore at the East side of the Town, if they be destitute of Anchors and Cables, and lye very safe.

Into this Harbor four several Waters empty themselves, and so run out into the Sea; which have served, and still are, the natural means, to cleanse, scoure, open and maintain the said Harbor Navigable. Of which, two are on the West side of the Town and Harbour, and the other two on the East side thereof.

The first on the West side, is called *Tillingham* Channel, or Water taking its rise four Miles from the Town, Sewing the Lowlands on that side, between *Brede* and *Beckley*, and *Udimer* and *Peasmarch*, and antiently was much wider, and the indraught thereof more large, then now it is; because several parcells of Land have been Inned from the same within memory. And lately, to wit, about two years since, the present Tennant of *Cadborough* Farm in *Rye* aforesaid, hath presumed of his own authority (without any Patent, Commission of *Sewers*, or Writ, *ad quod dampnum*) to Inne about a hundred Acres of Salts, usually before this Inning flowed by the Sea. This *Tillingham* Channel, is that which to preserve, the Major, Jurats and Commonality of *Rye* in the eight and thirtieth year of Q. *Eliz.* Reigne, were at the Charge of six hundred Pounds to lay a Sluce, in part of those very Salts now inclosed (the Channel then running there.) About two Miles up in this Channel, have Ships of

siderable burden been remembred by some yet living, to load Timber: So good was it then, before spoiled by the Innings aforesaid.

The second is *Winchelsea* Channel, runing up from *Rye* thither, and so through the Levells and Lowlands of *Icklesham*, *Pett*, *Gestling*, and on the South side of *Brede* and *Udimer*, and beyond *Brede* Bridge further into *Westfield*, &c. Sewing a great quantity of Marish grounds above eight Miles from *Rye* up in the Country. This Channel was within these twenty years last past so annoyed and stopped by a Sluce laid cross, and Groines made therein, to, and cross the very bottom thereof: That the said Levells could not Sew. So as His Majesties Commissioners of Sewers, for the said Levels were necessitated to order the taking up the said Sluce last mentioned, and Groines placed in the Channel as foresaid, and thereby, and by deepning the said Channel about the mouth of their Sewers, and heigtning their Walls, have reaped much benefit, and secured the said Lands by the one, from lying drowned by the Fresh, and by the other, from being drowned by the Salt-water.

The third and least considerable, is that called *Wenway* water, or Channel lying to the East of the said Town of *Rye*, and on the land side of the *Camber* Beach aforementioned, and formerly hath been deep enough for several Vessells to Anchor in, and had remained better then now it is; but that Lands have there been Inned, and more are said to be about Inning. This yet serves to Sew a good part of the Lands in East *Guldeford Marsh*, the Lands called *Camber* Lands, *&c.*

The fourth and most remarkable, is that Ancient and sometime Navigable River of *Rother*, running into the Main Channel of the Harbor at the East side of the Town, and by the West side of East *Guldeford*, descending

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from *Appledore*, and so from *Redding*, *Smalhithe*, *Muytam*, *Newenden*, *Bodiham*, *Rothersbridge*, and as far as *Rotherfield* in *Sussex* above four and twenty Miles from *Rye*, serving to Sew many thousand Acres of Land on the South, North, and West sides thereof, and on the East side between *Appledore* and *Rye* in *Shurlemere* about 2000 Acres of land. In the five Watrings in *Romney* Marsh about 9000 Acres. And in *Woolland* Marsh 20000 Acres, besides a great part of *East Guldeford* Marsh. And on the West side in *Wittersham* Level, about 3000 Acres. This River hath been reported of old, Navigable as far as *Bodiham* Castle, in the Walls whereof were said to be fastened Moaring Rings for Vessells. And there are those yet living, that heard an Ancient Shipwright of *Rye* say, that he helpt build one of Q. *Eliz.* Navy Ships at *Redding* aforementioned. And until the Dam or Sluce laid about ten years since (by order of the Comissioners of Sewers for *Newenden* Level) cross this River; was it Navigable to *Appledore* aforesaid, which is about seven Miles from *Rye*. For in the year 1661. was built at *Appledore*, a Ship of the burden of one hundred Tuns, or thereabouts, for one *William Bowers* of *Dover*. And about half a Mile from that, was another near the same burden, built for one Captain *Morecock*, in the year 1656. both above the place where the said Dam or Sluce is laid. And it is well known by many yet living, that before the laying of this Dam, or Sluce, and within these twenty years last past, and less; more then twenty Sail of good Ships might Ride afloat at low Water in the Harbor of *Rye*, as high up as the Ferry to *East-Guldeford* aforesaid; where now there is so great a Swarve, that none can lye. And beyond that, there is hardly water enough for a small Lighter to go to the place where the Stop is. Nor can a Vessel of much smaller Burden, then His Majesties Ship the St. *Andrew* was, (who with the *Happy Return* came into this

this Harbor in *September* 1666.) Ride afloat at low water where they did.

These things considered, it is easie to see what it is which threatens the utter ruine and decay of this Harbor, if not speedily prevented, and what reason there is for preserving thereof; which being duly weighed with those that follow, it would be a wonder if it should be slighted or neglected: As,

First, Among others, because this Harbor of *Rye* is, and time out of mind hath been, so great a succour for Merchants and Mariners in Storms, to save both their Lives, Ships and Goods, there being no other Harbour for which Ships in foul weather dare deal between the *Downes*, and Isle of *Wight*; (this nigh eighty Miles to the Westward, and that about Forty Miles to the Eastward.) And this Port so fitly scituate in times of War, serves for no small shelter and refuge to Ships chased by any Pyrate or Forreign Enemy; into which, as experience hath often testified, they put for security, who if they had further to run, would fall as prey or prize, into the hands of their Enemies.

Secondly, The goodness of the Harbor, as for Ships to ride in three Fathom water afloat at low water, as aforesaid; and usually there flows about five Fathom water on the top of the Stream, which makes the Harbor capacious to receive a great Fleet of Ships of considerable burden; whereby the said Harbor is rendred as good a Tide-Harbor as most in *England*, and better then any on the *French* Coast all along the Narrow. Besides, Vessels have here the conveniency of cleaning adry, or careening afloat, or for Tallowing and Victualling: And Boats ready, when Ships by any sign shall make for the Harbor to pilot them in.

Thirdly, The advance of Trade, and thereby of His Majesties Customs, seeing the better any Port is, the more it is frequented; and the more resort thereto, the more Victu-

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als are ſpent, and Merchandiſe there imported and exported.

Fourthly, By keeping the Harbor good, in removing the ſtops on the aforeſaid River of *Rother*, and other Channels, the In-draughts thereby being increaſed: the whole Country thereabouts will receive benefit to lade and unlade their Goods in the ſaid River and Channels, as anciently they have done, at far more eaſie rates then by Land-carriage; And to ſew their Lands better then now they are ſewed, if the Channels be but deepned, and their Walls heightned; for thereby, as aforeſaid, they will be ſecured againſt dammage by the freſh and ſalt Waters, and with leſs charge; whereas now, their Waterſcots on the Low-lands in ſeveral of the *Rother* Sewers aforeſaid, are more then the Rents and Profits of their Lands; ſo as many have let their Mariſh Lands lapſe into the Commiſſioners hands, rather then keep them to ſuch diſadvantage.

Fifthly, If the Harbor of *Rye* be ſuffered to periſh, not only *Rye*, but *Haſting*, will be ruined thereby: for they having but a ſtade place, are forced to lay up their Veſſels of burden in the Harbor of *Rye*.

To all which, others may be added, which for brevity ſake are here omitted, and the conſideration of all, committed to them concern'd in the premiſſes.

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